

## Message Text

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ACTION AID-05

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FROM AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAID, EG

SUBJECT: WHEAT HANDLING AT ALEXANDRIA

REF: CAIRO 1385

SUMMARY: FACED WITH EXTRAORDINARY NUMBER OF ARRIVALS TO BADLY CONGESTED PORT DURING UNUSUALLY SEVERE RAINY SEASON, GOE AUTHORITIES AND CIVILIAN WORKERS HAVE PROBABLY DONE AS GOOD A JOB OF HANDLING AND UTILITIZING PL 480 WHEAT SHIPMENTS AS LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT.

1. CONGEN HAS HAD SERIES OF MEETINGS PAST FEW DAYS WITH ALEXANDRIA OFFICIALS INVOLVED WITH GRAIN HANDLING AND PROCESSING, FROM DOCKSIDE TO DISTRIBUTION AFTER MILLING. ALL EGYPTIANS CANVASSED READILY CONCEDE THERE ARE NUMBER OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS BUT, AS NOTED PARA 3 REFTTEL, SEEM WELL AWARE OF SHORTCOMINGS AND ARE TRYING TO OPERATE AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE UNDER PREVAILING CONDITIONS. GIVEN ADMITTED DIFFICULTIES, HANDLING OF PL 480 WHEAT SHIPMENTS APPEARS BE AT LEAST AS EXPEDITIOUS AND CAREFUL AS THAT ACCORDED WHEAT IMPORTED FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, IF NOT MORE SO.

2. AS GRAIN DOCKS MAJOR PROBLEMS ARE (A) LIMITED QUAY

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FACILITIES (USUALLY NO MORE THAN FOUR VESSELS ALONGSIDE

AT ONE TIME), (B) INADEQUATE OR ANTIQUATED MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT (ALTHOUGH EIGHTEEN MORE VACUVATORS HAVE BEEN PURCHASED AND WILL SHORTLY BE AVAILABLE), (C) CRAMPED DOCK SPACE FOR RECEIVING HOPPERS, BAGGING OPERATION AND LOADING INTO TRUCKS, (D) LIMITED CONVEYOR BELT SYSTEM AND SILO STORAGE AT DOCKS FOR BULK HANDLING, AND (E) INADEQUATE RAIL AND WATER (CANAL BARGE) TRANSPORT TO REMOVE GRAIN QUICKLY.

3. AFTER LEAVING DOCKS, INEFFICIENCIES ARISE THOUGH (A) LACK OF ANY SILOS EXCEPT AT ALEXANDRIA PORT AND CAIRO, (B) MILLING INDUSTRY STILL EMERGING FROM "FARM-TO-LOCAL-MIL" PATTERNS OF CENTURY AGO, AND (C) INADEQUATE STORAGE FOR INCOMING GRAIN OR FINISHED FLOUR PRODUCTS EVEN AT LARGER MILLS SO MILLS OFTEN RUN BELOW CAPACITY IN PERIODS OF LOW DEMAND, CANNOT QUICKLY MEET SUDDEN SURGES OF HIGH DEMAND.

4. AHMED ABDEL-LATIF AL SHAIKH, PRESIDENT OF ALEXANDRIA SOUTHERN MILLS, IN MEETING WITH CONGEN OFFICERS FEBRUARY 20, CITED INADEQUATE TRANSPORT AND OTHER FACTORS LISTED IN FOREGOING PARAGRAPH, AND WENT ON TO MENTION LACK OF MODERN DRYING EQUIPMENT IN EGYPTIAN MILLS. THIS MEANS THAT EUROPEAN WHEAT (WHICH HAS NATURAL HIGH HUMIDITY CONTENT) OR OTHER WHEAT EXPOSED ACCIDENTALLY TO EXCESSIVE MOISTURE (AS IN ARRIVALS DURING RAINY SEASON) WILL NOT GRIND AS FINE AS DESIRED AND THEREFORE LEADS TO INFERIOR BAKED PRODUCTS.

5. AL SHEIKH ESTIMATED, AS HAVE SILO AND PORT AUTHORITIES AND ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE SHIP CAPTAIN NOW UNLOADING PL-480 WHEAT, THAT NORMAL TRANSIT LOSS IN UNLOADING AND IN BAGGING OR BULK SHIPPING TO MILLS OR SHORE STORAGE RUNS FROM ONE-HALF TO ONE PERCENT. UNUSUALLY EXPEDITIOUS REMOVAL OF RAIN-SOAKED WHEAT FROM DOCKS DIRECT TO MILLS FOR PROCESSING DURING RAINY SEASON (NOVEMBER TO MARCH) HAS HELD LOSS BY SPOILAGE TO MINIMUM, DESPITE GLOOMY PREDICTIONS OF CONCERNED ONLOOKERS (PARA ONE, REFTEL). AL SHAIKH SAID HE AS UNABLE EVEN GUESS AT EXTENT OF POSSIBLE LOSS TO RAIN DAMAGE, SAYING ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT HE HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED RAINY SEASON SO SEVERE AS THIS YEAR. AL SHAIKH DID REPORT VERY SERIOUS LOSS FROM 15,000 TONS OF BAGGED WHEAT REMOVED FROM DOCKS LAST FALL DURING CRASH PROGRAM TO CLEAR OVERLOADED STORAGE AREAS THREATENING TO STRANGLE PLOTT ENTIRELY. STORED UNDER TARPS IN OPEN FIELDS NEAR CITY, TORRENTIAL RAINS FLOODED THROUGH IRRIGATION DITCHES TO RUIN LOWER LAYERS OF STACKED BAGS AND IMPASSABLE MUD PREVENTED

TRUCKS COMMENCING TIMELY SALVAGE.

6. AT SHAIKH ALSO SAID NEED FOR MORE MODERN MILLS NEARER SECONDARY POPULATION CENTERS HAD BEEN RECOGNIZED SEVERAL YEARS AGO. UNFORTUNATELY, FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW, HALF OF 18 NEW MILSS AUTHORIZED WERE BUILT BY CZECKS, HALF BY EAST GERMANS, AND NONE ARE EVEN AS EFFICIENT AS OLDER MILLS NOW DOING JOB. HE THOUGH IMMEDIATE NEEDS WERE SPARE PARTS AND SOME REPLACEMENTS FOR MACHINERY OF OLDER MILLS, MODERN DRYERS TO UTILIZE BETTER THE HIGH HUMIDITY AND WATER-DAMAGED WHEAT, AND MORE STORAGE AND TRANSPORT FACILITIES. MORE MODERN AND MORE EFFICIENT MILLS COULD THEN BE PLANNED AND BUILT. HE HOPED THE TECHNOLOGY AND MACHINERY COULD COME FROM THE US AND FROM WESTERN EUROPE.

7. COMMENT - AT ALL OBSERVABLE STAGES OF PROGRESS OF PL 480 WHEAT, FROM SHIP'S MASTERS THROUGH PORT AUTHORITY, DOCK AND SILO PERSONNEL, TRANSPORT INDUSTRY AND MILLERS, CONGEN OFFICERS FOUND GENERALLY SINCERE PEOPLE STRIVING TO DO BEST WITH OFTEN INADEQUATE MEANS. AND WE FOUND REAL APPRECIATION FOR AMERICAN SUPPLY OF THE WHEAT AND AMERICAN CONCERN FOR EGYPT'S NEEDS. SINGED CHASE. EILTS

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